

THE JACOBS REPORT

**GILDA Z. JACOBS
MICHIGAN SENATE
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FOURTEENTH DISTRICT**

**For Immediate Release
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SINGLE SEX CLASSROOMS PASS SENATE

Less-than-expected Opposition

Legislation allowing public school districts to create single-sex schools passed the Senate today with two Republicans and three Democrats voting against the bill.

Senators Bruce Patterson (R-Canton), Laura Toy (R-Livonia), Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing), Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) and Gilda Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) voted against the bill for a 33-5 vote.

Senator Patterson's main contention with the bill involves the potential violation of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the equal protection clause.

"The threshold of the issue for all of us who took our oath of offices after and only after swearing to uphold the Constitution of the United States and Michigan is, is this bill [a violation] of the 14th Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause? That's the test," he said.

Brater presented the same argument as Patterson, but also added that she doesn't believe the studies single-sex proponents presented supporting their point of view necessarily represented the facts.

"I feel like I'm in a time warp back to the 19th Century," she said.

Those in favor of the bill cited several studies that show some boys and girls excel when they learn in single-sex environments. Brater said that these studies, like any studies, can be presented to support either side. She then produced studies of her own that showed single-sex schools can perpetuate gender stereotypes.

For example, while studying American settlers, an all-girls school taught the kids about quilting while the all-boys school taught the boys survival skills, she said.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has said on more than one occasion that the bill violates the constitution, which alludes to a possible lawsuit.

Some Michigan public schools already have single-sex classrooms. Four public schools in the state and one charter school are listed on a national Web site that lists single-sex schools and classrooms as having single-sex classrooms.

The ACLU has not commented whether or not single sex classrooms are on the same radar as single sex schools.

"We haven't sat down and talked about that," Elmir said. "This bill has been about single-gender schools."

Before the bill passed, language was added to ensure that an all-boys school and an all-girls school get equal opportunities. An amendment prohibiting any school district from forcing any students into a same sex school was also adopted.

EDUCATION BOARD CALLS FOR BULLYING BILLS

Policy Under Development

Saying that it has a model anti-bullying policy under development, the State Board of Education officially called on the Legislature to force districts to adopt a policy.

Board Vice President John Austin (D-Ann Arbor) said it appeared anti-bullying legislation would not be moving through the House, but he said it was needed to ensure action by local districts.

“We should call on the Legislature to pass legislation that requires school districts to put in place a bullying policy based on the model policy,” he said. If the Legislature does not act, he said the board should at least pass a policy directing districts to adopt the policy.

He and others said the board, while it does have a policy recommending local anti-bullying policies, did not put a timeline on that original policy and may not, because it does not hold the purse strings, have any authority to enforce the policy.

Some board members raised concerns about calling for legislation before the board had its model policy in place, but the motion was worded to seek legislation calling on the department to develop such a policy. That would allow the department to complete the process of seeking comment on the draft policy.

Triangle Foundation believes there is enough support in the Michigan House of Representatives to pass anti-bullying legislation, but fears that the committee chair is sitting on the bill from because it would also grant greater protections to GLBT youth and other minorities.

HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

Youth Exchange: An Affirmative Action Symposium

Saturday, June 17, 2006, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. the Hope United Methodist Church Imani Institute presents the Youth Exchange: An Affirmative Action Symposium featuring skits, visual and performing arts. The event is free and open to all youth.

The church is located at 26275 Northwestern Highway, Southfield, MI 48076. For additional information, please contact Cherryl Thames at 248.506.5118.

All Michigan legislation can be tracked at <http://www.legislature.michigan.gov/>.

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State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

This newsletter is produced in single-space form in order to save paper and transmission costs.

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